

TREATMENT INSTRUCTIONS for HEAD LICE

The following information, taken from a Ministry of Health pamphlet, should be of assistance to you and your family in treating head lice.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

Live lice can't always be seen by the naked eye, so their presence isn't always obvious. The first and most pronounced sign is persistent itching and scratching. When lice puncture the scalp to obtain food it irritates the skin and makes it itchy. Other suspicious signs include scratch marks, or what appears to be a rash, on the neck and scalp.

GETTING RID OF HEAD LICE & NITS:

Once the presence of head lice has been confirmed, immediate action should be taken. Head lice spread with amazing speed, so the sooner you get rid of them, the less likelihood there is of passing the head lice on to others.

Nits can be picked from the child's hair using your fingers and pinching the nit to remove it from the hair follicle.

WHAT TO DO:

Obtain a head lice shampoo, cream rinse or lotion from a pharmacy. No prescription is necessary. A pharmacist will be able to advise you on the effectiveness of available products and precautions to take when using them. All head lice products are generally safe and effective if used as directed.

Use head lice products only on people infested with live lice or their eggs (nits). No head lice product will prevent you from getting lice.

DISINFECTING PERSONAL ITEMS:

While lice sometimes crawl into hats and other personal items, they don't like to leave the human head because it is their only source of food. Lice can survive for up to 55 hours away from the human head without nourishment. However, nits attached to stray hairs can hatch away from their host. This is why it is appropriate to clean personal items as follows:

Soak combs, brushes and hair accessories in a head lice product for an hour.

Vacuum loose hairs from carpets and upholstered furniture. Discard the vacuum bag in a sealed bag.

All clothes, bed linens and towels used by an infected person within the last two weeks will need to be washed. If you find live lice or stray hairs that could hold nits, wash the items in very hot water and/or dry for 20 minutes using the hot cycle of the dryer. The heat will destroy the lice and nits.

As a precautionary measure, such items that can't be washed may be dry-cleaned or sealed in a plastic bag for two weeks.

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- Lack of cleanliness does not cause head lice.
- It has been noted that lice prefer clean scalps to dirty ones.
- Examine your child's head for lice at least weekly. If lice are present, take immediate measures to get rid of them. The longer the delay in taking action, the bigger the problem.
- Don't forget to notify your child's school.
- It is not necessary to shave the head to get rid of head lice. Keeping hair short will not guard against infestation.
- Head lice are a nuisance, not a health hazard. They don't carry disease and won't cause illness.
- Children should be discouraged from sharing hats and hair accessories to help prevent the spread of head lice.